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A  
DISCOURSE  
OF  
Self-Murder.



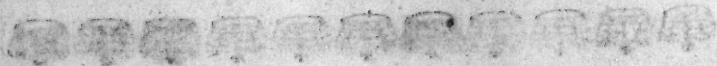


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DISCOURSE



Self-Instruction.



A  
DISCOURSE  
O F

**Self-Murder.**

In which the Heinousness of the **SIN**  
is Expos'd.

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By **JOHN COCKBURN**, D. D. Vicar  
of *Northall, Middlesex.*

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L O N D O N:  
Printed for the Author, 1716.

DISCOURSE

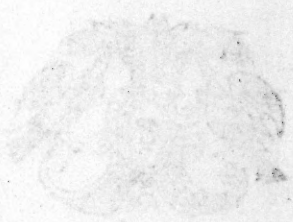
OF

Self-Murder.

In which the Principles of the Law

is explained.

By JOHN COLEMAN, D.D. Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford.



LONDON:

Printed for the Author, 1715.





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## DISCOURSE

O F

## Self-Murder.

I.



**W**HAT *Solon* said of *Paricide*, is applicable to *Self-Murder*: For being ask'd, as both *Diogenes Laertius* and *Tully* reports it, why he made no Laws against that, neither appointed any Punishment for it; his Answer was, *That he never expected to meet with such detestable Criminals*. The Answer was becoming a wise Man, and one who was sensible of the Impressions of Humane Nature. For the offering Violence, either to Parents or one's

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self,

self, is contrary to what Nature teacheth, to what Reason dictates, and is inconsistent with Humanity. The very Beasts are careful of their Life, and are taught by Nature, to flee from all things hurtful and prejudicial to 'em ; and how should it be thought, that those of a more perfect Nature, would be guilty of such unnatural Barbarities as the very Beasts are not capable of ? But whatever Men may be suppos'd to be, when Humane Nature is abstractly considered; there are too many Instances daily, which prove that Men are capable of the greatest Wickedness, and of doing the most unreasonable Things, which is a Demonstration of that original and universal depravation which the Scripture teacheth : It confirms also another Doctrine of the same Holy Scripture, of the Devil's watching Men, and entring them readily, when not upon their Guard, and neither mindful nor careful to resist him. For without the Instigation and Influence of that Evil, Envious and Malicious Spirit, it cannot be supposed, that Men of themselves, even left to themselves, could be transported to such detestable Things, and to act so contrary to Nature, to Reason, to Duty, to Self-Interest,

Interest, and to all both Divine and Humane Obligations, as we see they sometimes do.

II. There is Truth in the Observation, that there is no Paradox or absurd Opinion, which has not been maintain'd by some or other Philosopher : But none, except the extravagant Sect of the *Stoicks*, defended *Self-Murder*, all others condemn'd It, and have also given strong Reasons against It from Nature, and Reason. So all Civilized Nations, for expressing their just Abhorrence of it, have order'd some Indignity to the Body of such as did make themselves away.

III. In Canonical Scripture there are only three Instances of *Self-Murder*, viz. that of King *Saul*, *Achitophel*, and *Judas Iscariot*, who betrayed our blessed Lord ; all of them Persons unworthy of Imitation, being deserted of God, Reprobated and delivered up to Perdition.

IV. As for *Samson*, he is very unjustly propos'd as an Example of *Self-Violence*; one may alledge as well the Instance of every generous King, or publick-



lick-spirited General, or other Person, who expose their Lives, and run upon visible and inevitable Dangers, in the lawful Defence of their Country and Religion. *Samson* did not procure his own Death out of any Pet or Peevishness, nor from Melancholy and Impatience: But being, by the special Appointment of God, Judge and Ruler of *Israel*, He, as became a Publick-spirited Person, did not consider private Interest, but the publick Good, and therefore bravely ventured his Life to the Honour of his God and Country; and for taking just Vengeance on the publick Enemy, who insolently oppressed himself and his People. He was brought to the House of *Dagon*, in contempt of the true God, there the *Philistines* insulted him, and took Occasion, from his Misfortunes, to praise their false God, and to reproach the God of *Israel*; wherefore, out of a holy and just Indignation, having recovered his miraculous Strength, he resolv'd to use it at that remarkable Juncture, and in such a Manner, as would evidently exalt the Honour of his God, confound *Dagon* and his Worshipers, and deliver his People at once from their cruel Oppressors. 'Tis true, he could not but be



be sensible that his Attempt might put an end to his own Life ; but that was no Reason for declining it ; and if he had declined that fair Opportunity of serving God and his Country, he would have bewrayed Want of both Courage and a publick Spirit. Dying is a Duty and honourable, when such noble Effects follow it. *Samson* did not intend the killing himself : His first and chief Intention, was to honour God, and to relieve his oppressed Country ; so that his Death was only the Consequence of that noble Resolution and Attempt. Thus *Samson's* Fact was not a violent or unnatural Attempt upon himself, and may be very well defended, without the Pretence of a secret Impulse for it, which very probably he had, tho' it cannot be proved by exprefs Texts of Scripture. *Vid. Aug. de civ. Dei. lib. 1. cap. 21. cum animadv. Longini.*

V. Something of this nature may be offered in Defence of *Eleazar*, who ended his Life Fighting for the Liberty of his Country ; *1. Mac. 6. 41.* But that of *Razis*, *2 Mac. 14. 41.* may bear a Debate, and being Apocryphal, I shall not trouble my self with it : Neither, indeed,

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is it material, what may be said for or against particular Examples; for Examples ought not to determine us in this or any other Case, where positive Precepts or evident Reasons do call to the contrary. It is our Duty to follow that which is just, right, good, and praiseworthy, tho' we should be singular in it; and what is evil should be avoided with all Care, tho' all the World should approve of it by Opinion, and recommend it by Practice; and for that Cause, all willful and deliberate Violence to one's own Life should be abhorred, being a heinous Crime by the Light of Nature, and a complex of crying Sins by the Light of the Gospel.

VI. For first, It is against Nature, the first Motions of which is Self-preservation, as is evident in all Kinds of Beings: For all of them, from the very first Moment of their Production, have strong Inclinations after whatever is necessary, proper, useful or convenient for Life, and as strong an Aversion to every Thing hurtful to it. All are careful of Life, and when in danger, every one exerts all their Natural Sagacity and Power in defence thereof. This is wisely

ly contrived, by the Author of Nature and the Creator of all Things, for the Continuance and Preservation of the several Kinds of Animals, which were made not to be destroyed instantly, but to be continued for the publick Good of the Universe. For the same Purpose, Self-love is implanted in Man, that he may not neglect himself; but be likewise engaged and stirred up to a due Care of himself and his Life, and to be capable of pursuing the other Ends of his Creation. Wherefore, the Love and Care of Life, are not only agreeable to Nature, but it is the first natural and necessary Duty; for no other Duty can be perform'd, nor any other Obligation answered, till this be observed: And consequently, nothing can be supposed more unnatural, than the offering Violence to one's own Life. *No Man yet ever hated his own Flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, saith the Apostle: that is, no Man is by Nature prompted to the one, but always to the other. Skin for Skin and all that a Man hath will he give for his Life, was true, tho' spoke by the Devil: nor more true than just; for Things are valuable, first, by their relation to Life, and as they are useful*



ful to it; as Contrariety to Life is a just Ground of Aversion and Hatred. We naturally love and esteem those, whom we think helpful for comforting and cherishing Life; and we judge Wrath and Rage most just and reasonable, when a Design upon our Life is apprehended. What a Monster then in Nature is he, who wilfully and willingly does that to himself, which he dreads and fears from another, and what he would to the utmost of his Power hinder another to do?

VII. Again, as *Self-Murder* is unnatural, with respect to one's self, so it is Cruelty and Injustice to Kindred, near Relations, and all others concerned in him: For it sadly afflicteth them, impairing their Comforts, disappointing their Hopes, filling them with inward Grief, and exposing them to outward Shame. Now, what Wickedness is it thus to requite the anxious and tender Care of Parents, the dear Affection of a Wife, the dutiful Respect of Children, the Kindness of Friends, and the Good-will of Neighbours, and others embark'd in the same Business and Profession? Certainly, none can wilfully and deliberate-



ly resolve upon this Fact, but must first throw off all natural Regard to himself, and all Humanity towards others. Suppose it was lawful and innocent with respect to one's self singly and separately considered, yet it is neither lawful nor innocent, when of such evil Consequence with respect to others. For it is not just to please our selves to the Prejudice of others, especially those to whom we are nearly related by Blood, Interest, or voluntary Engagements, such Selfishness is inconsistent with Justice, Generosity or good Nature ; it is brutish, and therefore unworthy of a Man. *Look not every Man on his own Things, but every Man also on the Things of others*, saith St. Paul, meaning that it is the Duty of every one to consider and seek what is good and acceptable to others, as well as what may please himself.

VIII. *Thirdly, Self-Murder* is Criminal, in regard of the Civil State, depriving it of a Member without its Consent, and without any just or necessary Occasion. Birth or Habitation makes us Subjects, and being Subjects, we are under Laws and Government, and so have no absolute power over our Bodies and  
Lives ;

Lives; that is the Property and Prerogative of the Sovereign, who also ought to use it as it seemeth best for the Publick Good. If every one was allowed to do what seemeth right in his own Eyes, all Confusion and Mischief would follow ; for restraining which, Government was Instituted and agreed upon, and by this, all private Persons are obliged to surrender themselves to the publick State, and not to dispose of themselves otherwise than the publick Government directeth, which is not done by him that layeth violent Hands on himself ; he that doth so, offers Violence to the publick Body, of which he is a Member, the Good of which he ought to seek with all Care ; he usurps the Magistrates Office, he disturbs the Government, shakes the Foundation of it, and recommends a pernicious Practice, which if it obtain'd, would soon bring an utter Desolation to all human Society. A dangerous and pernicious Example brings the Guilt of wickedness towards the Publick. But alas, the Love of one's Nation and Country, and a dutiful Sense of publick Good, which was the Spring of those Heroical actions among the *Romans*, are now lost and laid aside ; not only what  
may

may be thought private Interest, but even odd and unaccountable Humours are more regarded than the publick Good. But every one ought to preserve his Life for the sake of the Publick, which may have need of it and occasion for it. *Dulce & decorum est pro patria mori*, as saith the Poet: But it is disgraceful to run out of the World, in a Manner which is detrimental to both the publick and private Persons.

IX. *Fourthly*, Such *Self-Violence* is odious and shameful, because prompted by Pride, and an immoderate Conceit of one's self, and bewraying Weakness of Spirit, and Want of true Fortitude or Manly Courage. For they who thus hastily and before their Time go out of the World, have no other Reason, but because they think themselves slighted in it, and not suitably respected according to their own pretended Merit; or because they are reduc'd to some hard and uneasy Circumstances, which they have neither Patience to bear, nor Courage to struggle with.

Even



Even *Cato* kill'd himself because he could not brook *Cesar's* Victory, nor behold one raised above him, whom he judged inferiour to himself; for if he had thought Submission to *Cesar* absolutely unlawful or unbecoming a wise and good Man, why did he advise his Son to it? But not valuing his Son as himself, he thought the Quality of a Subject might sute with him, which his own Pride scorn'd; and therefore he made away with himself before *Cesar* could reach him, tho' certainly, he had not the least Reason to doubt that *Cesar* would have treated him most honourably. This End of *Cato* stain'd his former Life, and leaves a perpetual Blott upon his Memory, and that strict Virtue for which he was so much admired. This Fact of *Cato*, shewed that he was not perfectly wise, nor a true Patriot, nor a Man of commendable Courage. Not Wise, because it is a wise Man's Part to suit himself to Junctures, to make the best of what happens, and not to fret at Events which are not in the Power of Man. Not a true Patriot, because if the Love of his Country had prevail'd, he had neither  
gone



gone out of the World, nor yet retired or absconded himself, knowing that his Reputation and Popularity would have made *Cæsar* glad of his Friendship, which would have been useful to save his Friends, to preserve the Liberty of his Country, and to prevent those Cruelties Oppressions and Ravages, which are common upon such Changes of Government. Nor did *Cato* hereby shew true Courage, but on the contrary, Weakness of Mind, as *St. Augustin* hath fully proved. Nor doth this appear only by the Light of the Gospel, but also by Natural Light: For *Aristotle*, as well as others, says that it is Softness and Effeminacy, to avoid suffering by a voluntary Death, and that the Virtue of Fortitude, requires a patient enduring of Evils.

*Civ. Dei.*  
*Lib. 1. Cap.*  
*22, 23.*

*Ethic. Lib.*  
*3. Cap. 7.*

*Rebus in angustis, facile est contemnere  
vitam :*

*Fortiter ille facit, qui miser esse potest.*

*Martial.*

We correct our Children when they take  
Pet, because not humoured, and when  
out of Peevishness, they Run away,  
Hide themselves, cry, and refuse to

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eat :

eat: How unbecoming then a Man,  
is that Weakness which is faulty in a  
Child?

*Proinde etas donec brevis hæc incertaque  
durat*

*Gaudebit quicumque sapit pro viribus, &  
non*

*Frangetur quoties fortuna urgebitur ira.*  
Marcel. pul. Gemini.

*Si cupiunt fortes fieri, discrimina oportet  
Multa pati, & multos coguntur ferre la-  
bores.*

Idem. Virg.

XI. But *Fifthly*, The great Atrocity  
of wilful *Self-Murder*, is in reference to  
GOD, whom it most heinously offends :  
For, first, It is an outrageous Violence to  
the Image of GOD which we bear, and  
which is given as a Reason, why the  
Life of another should not be taken a-  
way, *Gen. 9. 6.* for if the Blood of an-  
other ought not to be shed, because, *in  
the Image of God made he Man*, the same  
Reason should tie up our Hands from  
all Attempts upon our own Life. *Se-  
condly*, It is a contemptuous undervaluing  
of a Divine Blessing, which, rightly  
used,

used, is the Foundation of Happiness, both Temporal and Eternal. The despising and rejecting Gifts from a Superior, freely and generously bestowed, is very provoking. *Thirdly*, It is a downright Thwarting his clear Will, manifested first at the Creation, and afterwards repeated by express Revelation : For God not only created Man, but provided him proper Food which he proposed to him, thereby intimating that 'twas his Will and Pleasure, that Man should take care of his own Life, and maintain it by the Use of proper and necessary Food. Again, one of those Ten Commandments delivered to *Moses*, which are perpetually binding, is *Thou shalt not Kill*, which being in general Terms, *vid. Aug. de Civ. Dei Lib. 1. c. 20.* must be understood, to forbid the Killing our selves as well as others. This is further confirm'd by that other Commandment of *Loving our Neighbour as our Selves* ; for this not only supposeth, but enjoyneth a natural and reasonable Love of our selves, otherwise the Duty of Love to others would be very precarious ; nor could this Precept be any Security to our Neighbour, if the doing our selves Hurt and Violence was consistent with natural and reasonable *Self-love*. It is

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therefore, the Will of GOD, that every one cherish and preserve his Life. *Fourthly*, He that kills himself, does usurp God's Right and Prerogative, and insolently assumes a Liberty to dispose of what belongs to GOD, without his Order or Leave. Every Man's Life is his own, only by Use and Possession, as a Farm or Tenement, and not by Property; it is not absolutely given, but lent for certain Ends and Uses; it is a Trust and Depositum, to be kept till call'd for by him who gave it, and who only hath absolute Dominion, because all are his Creatures. JESUS CHRIST, being Lord, had Power to lay down his Life, but none other has Power to do so, but according to the Will of GOD, who is the Author of Life. For, saith *Lactantius*, as we came not into this Life by our own Will, so neither must we forsake this Tabernacle of the Body, without his Leave and Command who brought us hither, that we might maintain it, and reside in it during his Pleasure. Which is not unelegantly set forth in these Lines,

*Infl. Lib.*  
3. C. 18.

*Vita-*



*Vitaque mancipio nulli datur, omnibus  
usu.*

*Vita data est utenda, data est sine fœnore  
nobis*

*Mutua, nec certa persolvienda die.*

*Fifthly*, He who wilfully makes himself away, disowns Providence, or refuseth to commit himself to the Divine Conduct; he quarrels with the Divine Dispensations, he resists GOD's Will, distrusts his Power, and puts no Confidence in his Wisdom or Goodness; he is guilty of Murmuring, and denies that humble Submission which is due to the Sovereign of the World, who, as he has all Power, so all Wisdom and Goodness, for making every Thing work together for Good to them that love him and depend upon him. Thus *Self-Murder* is many Ways offensive to GOD, and cannot but highly provoke him. From all which it necessarily followeth,

XII. *Sixthly*, That Willful *Self-Murder* ends in Eternal Damnation. Hell and Eternal Misery is the unavoidable Consequence, and just Punishment of it. This is no rash Verdict, but what every one must say, who will speak and judge

by Gospel Light. For by that it is evident, that great and crying Sins are not pardon'd without Repentance, which in this Case is impossible; For he that is guilty dieth with his Sin, and so cannot Repent here, and hereafter there is no Place for Repentance: Indeed, as soon as Men pass into the other World, they will be sensibly convinc'd of all their Errors which they entertain'd in this; but it will avail them nothing. Then the Atheist will see a Demonstration of a Deity, but it will not rejoyce his Heart, it will give him all Confusion and Consternation. Then he that disbelieved the Gospel will be instantly perswaded of the Truth of it; and every wicked Man will be made sensible of his Wickedness, which cannot but produce some Remorse; yet that will not better their Condition, or procure them any Ease or Relief. For *as the Wicked shall be turn'd into Hell, and all the People that forget GOD*, so once there, there is no getting out, as *Abraham* told the Rich-Man, *Luke 16*. What wicked Madness then is it, to precipitate One's self, into this Place of horrid Torment, only to shun some Uneasiness of the present Life? Is it not Interest as well as Duty, and true Wisdom, to resolve to bear

bear all the Evils, which it pleaseth GOD to try us with, and to study the approving our selves to him by Patience, and other Acts of Well-doing, rather than run the Hazard of devouring Fires and Everlasting Burnings.

XIII. We read of one *Cleombrotus*, who was so taken with *Plato* his *Discourse of Immortality*, that he made himself away immediately, to the end he might enjoy that happy State ; and, indeed, if such Violence and Precipitation were allowable and pardonable, on any Account, it might be in this Case, when it proceeds from an eager Desire after that blessed State in the other World.

*Quod nisi Religio obstaret, legesque Platonis,  
Et Deus, hortarer Cultro dimittere Vitam.*

But *Cleombrotus* was more hasty than wise: For that was not the proper Door of Entrance: A Soldier is not likely to be preferr'd and rewarded, if he quit his Post before the Time, and before his General order it. So it is our Duty to keep patiently our present Post, to maintain it, and to do all that belongs to it, and then to expect to be advanc'd to that blessed State in the other World. This is elegantly, accord-

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ing to natural Light, set forth by Cicero in his *Somnium Scipionis*, and by Macrobius, in his Commentary upon it, Lib. 1. Cap. 13. Plato also, himself, in that very Discourse of Immortality, which is supposed to be his *Phædo*, which gave Occasion to *Cleombrotus* his making himself away so hastily: I say, *Plato*, even there, disswades from all such Violence, and plainly asserts, that none ought to depart this Life, without the Call and Leave of GOD, who is the Author of Life; Nay *Cicero*, tho' he defends *Cato*, because his excessive Esteem of him would not allow any Fault in him, yet he makes this Fact altogether unlawful in others.

Offic. Lib.  
1. 3. Epist.  
Lib. 9. Ep.  
16. ad pop.  
pat.

XIV. Nor indeed, did any defend it, except the *Stoicks*, as has been said; and it was agreeable enough to their Character, which is given by *Meric Casaubon*, for he saith, Of all the several Sects and Professions of Philosophers, that ever were known or heard of in the World, there was not any that ever did hold Maxims and Opinions so contrary to Flesh and Blood; never any that was judged, even by the Learned Heathens themselves (witness Learned *Plutarch*, who hath written a whole

Preface to  
M. Aureli-  
us his Me-  
ditations.



whole Book of this very Subject) so grossely and manifestly to oppose Nature, and to overthrow all Grounds and Principles of Humane Sense or Reason, as the Stoicks did. But tho' these odd Kind of Men did set light by this Crime, yet in the Judgment of all others, it was both Heinous and Infamous; therefore *Virgil* calls the Death of *Amata*, *Lethum Informe*, an ignominious Death, because she hang'd herself, and according to the common Notion then, he gives all who die after this Manner, the third Place in Hell, where they were to continue for ever. Thus

*Proxima deinde tenent mæsti loca, qui  
sibi Lethum*

*Infantes peperere manu, lucemque perosi  
Projecere animas: quàm vellent athere in  
alto*

*Nunc & pauperiem & duros perferre  
labores!*

*Fata obstant, tristique palus innabilis  
unda*

*Alligat, & novies styx interfusa co-  
ercet.*

*Eneid. Lib. 6.*

**XV.**

XV. What a detestable Crime *Self-Murder* is, may be learn'd, not only from the private Sentiments of the wisest and best Men, but also from the public Acts of all well regulated States, Ancient and Modern; for all of them have expressed their Indignation at this Fact, by either forbidding the Body to be Buried, or commanding it to be done in some disgraceful ignominious Manner, which made it more odious and contemptible than Carrion. So it was among the *Jews*, as *Josephus* informs us. This was likewise the Custom of the *Greeks*, Proofs of which *Grotius* produces; And particularly at *Athens*, it was order'd to chop of their Hands and expose them. And that the *Romans* were agreeable to all well form'd Commonwealths in this Matter, appears from *Servius* his Notes on *Virgil*. *Plato* adviseth the Burying of the Body, out of Respect to the Living, lest it corrupt the Air; but orders it to be in some remote Desart or frightful Place whither none resort, and that there should be no Stone or Monument or Inscription, he being unworthy of all Remembrance, who was guilty of such unnatural Barbarity

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*De Bel.*  
*Jud. L. 3.*  
*C. 14.*

*De Jure*  
*Bel. L. 11.*  
*C. 19.*

*Eneid. 12.*

*De Leg.*  
*B. 9.*

towards himself. So both Civil and Canon Law do severely inhibit the Burying any such Person without Ignominy, and some or other Mark of Indignation, which is observ'd every where throughout the Christian World ; and 'twas always practis'd every other where, except in some Places where there was a Barbarous Custom of giving Leave for one to make away with himself. For as at this Day, in some Parts of the Pagan World, it is permitted some Wives who desire it, to burn themselves upon their Husbands Death, so it is done with great Solemnity and Pomp. And Monsieur *Montaign* reports a very *Lib. 2. c.* odd Passage of *Marseilles* in *France*. For<sup>3.</sup> he says that in former Times, they kept in the publick Treasury, Poison prepar'd at the publick Expence, which was given to such as desired to end their Life, provided the Senate of Six Hundred approv'd their Reasons : But if any kill'd themselves without this Licence, they were dispiseable and ignominously treated.

XVI. Some may think it unreasonable to appoint a Punishment for those who cannot be sensible of it, nor better'd



ter'd by it. But it is very reasonable to express a Detestation of a detestable Deed, tho' the guilty Person be escap'd and got without the Sense of it. But tho' the Dead are not sensible of what is done after they are gone; yet it is just to make them suffer in what remains of them, *viz.* Their Body and Name, which naturally are dear to every one; for there are none who are not, by the Inclinations of Nature, and the Dictates of common Reason, desirous of having their Body decently Buried, and their Memory respectfully Honoured. And nothing can be more reasonable, than to deny them these Acts of Humanity, due even to Strangers and Enemies, who had no Humanity towards themselves.

Lib. 3. c. 17. He, said *Josephus*, as *Hegeſippus* reports it, who goes away without the Leave and Consent of G O D, our common Father, ought to have no Benefit from the Earth, the common Mother of all. But all Punishments are not intended to better the Guilty, on whom they are inflicted; the chief Design is *ad terrorem*, and for preventing the wicked Imitation of them. So *Plutarch* tells us, that when neither the Tears of Parents, nor the Perswasions of Friends, nor the Contrivances

See Plut.  
Morals,  
Engl. Vol.  
1. of Virt.  
Women,  
Ex. 11.



vances of the Magistrate, could hinder the *Myleſian* Maids from Hanging themſelves, by the Counſel of a Wiſe Man, there was a Stop put to it, viz. By ordering that thoſe Maids that Hanged themſelves, ſhould be carried Naked through the Market-place. For, as the ſame Author adds, They that had no Dread upon them of the moſt terrible Things of the World, viz. Death and Pain, could not endure the Fancy of an immodeſt Thing, no not to be expoſed to Shame after Death.

XVII. But this wiſe Policy, this juſt and neceſſary Precaution, is fruſtrated here with us, by the common Practice of, I will not ſay ignorant, but moſt corrupt Coroners and their Jury, who generally bring in all, or very many *Self-Murderers*, even ſome notoriously ſo, becauſe evidently deliberate, and with all ſtudied Cunning for preventing any Obſtruction to it; I ſay, they bring them it *Non Compos*, being either Bribe'd with Money, or over Aw'd with Friends; and ſo by theſe Means, our juſt and neceſſary Laws are eluded, the Chriſtian Office of the Dead is profan'd, by uſing it in behalf of one who is Damned, which is a mocking God, the Abhorrence

rence of that unnatural barbarous and most wicked Fact is lessen'd, and instead of preventing it, there is Encouragement given to it. This is of that Consequence, that the Government should look more strictly into it, and lodge the *Coroner's* Trust with Persons of true Integrity and Courage, who will neither take Bribes, nor yet stand in such Awe of any, as to go evidently against both Truth and publick Good. And I am of the Opinion, that it would make them more cautious, if with their Verdict they were obliged to give their Reasons to some of Judgment and Authority; for then they would not so easily put up with weak and unsufficient ones. For Instance, I was once in a Place where one Hang'd himself; next Day, the Coroner and his Assistants brought him in *Non Compos*; I being somewhat surpriz'd with such a Verdict, demanded their Reason, and was bluntly answered, *that some had declared, that a Day or two before he was seen reading on a Book.* Upon which, I could not forbear to say, *Friend, how sincere you and your Brethren are I know not; but the Reason of your Verdict is no Honour to the Place, nor Encouragement to Learning; and I hope none other*

*other will take that as an Evidence of a disordered Mind.* I relate this to shew how easily these Men are prevail'd upon to elude the Law in this Case, which is of more Importance than the Honour of any particular Family, or the Reputation of any particular Person; better any Family suffer some Disgrace, and he that was some time in good Reputation, be branded with deserved Infamy, than to give the least Countenance to a wicked Fact, so pernicious to the Publick, and which is the Scandal of this Nation, being more often practis'd here than any where else. If it be said in Excuse for these Verdicts, that they who do such Violence to themselves, must be disordered in their Minds, otherwise they could not or would not attempt it. I answer, the same Excuse may be made for every other Murder, and all those atrocious Crimes which bring Persons to the Gibbet, which are Acts of Madness in one Sense, but not such as lessen the Guilt, or excuse from Punishment.

XVIII. Indeed, it must be own'd and confess'd, that these severe Things should only take place, when the Fact is evidently Willful and Deliberate, and  
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committed with so much Sense, as would have made the Person obnoxious to Judicial Prosecutions and Trials, if accused of any Crime. But if the Person be really *Non Compos*, if he has done this Violence to himself in a Phrensy, Delirium, or Fitt of Madness, than there should be Pity instead of Indignation, and Tears of Bewailing, rather than Wrathful Exclamations; for in that Case the Person is not so Guilty as Unfortunate, and the Fact is a greater Instance of Humane Wretchedness and Misery, than of Unnatural Wickedness. I say, not so Guilty, for all Guilt cannot be denied, and I doubt much, if this can be the End of a truly Innocent and Upright Person, as the worst of other Deaths may be. He must have little Humanity, who would not deplore the Misfortune of being the accidental Occasion of another's Death: But it is more deplorable to be One's own Executioner. If the Person has had the Use of his Senses and Reason in former Times, it may be suspected a Divine Judgment for some particular Sins. He that dies casually by another, is said *to be delivered by GOD into the other's Hand*. Exod. 21. 13. So he that Kills himself, is for  
this



this End delivered into his own Hands ; for it is not an Act of meer Chance, which Providence knew not, neither was in any wise concerned in ; and seeing it is so much against Nature, and has so many fatal Consequences, it cannot be said to bear the same Stamp with other Afflictions, and like them, to proceed from Love and Faithfulness. Some more Marks of Displeasure appear in it, which gives it the Character of a Judgment, for punishing some Sin of the Person himself, or of some of his Ancestors. But these Judgments of GOD, must not be too curiously canvassed, because we have not yet Light enough for it. *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of GOD ! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out ?*

XIX. I should run out too far upon this Subject, if I would either consider all the Cases which may refer to it, or examine all the Arguments, which Melancholy Persons, or such as affect Wit and Singularity, have devised, in Defence of this wicked and unnatural Fact. What I have said is sufficient for begetting an utter Abhorrence of it. If any  
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would dip further into a Subject so unpleasant, I referre them to that Copious, Learned and Laborious *Answer* of the Reverend Dr. *Adams*, to the most Imprudent, as well as most Dangerous Book ever was publish'd, I mean that of *Self-Murder*, which Dr. *Donne's* Son set forth, as he says, according to his Father's Manuscript, but not much for his Father's Credit ; for tho' it shews a good deal of Learning, yet it shews also, that good Parts, and a great deal of time were employ'd to a very bad Purpose. And certainly Dr. *Donne* was much to be blamed, for not destroying these Papers, which he was not at the pains to answer. For having out of Curiosity, or for Pleasure, or for some other private End, gathered Poison, he ought either to have thrown it away, or to have left an Antidote for preventing the Hurt and Danger of it.

XX. Some are carried to this horrid unnatural Fact Insensibly and by Degrees ; others are, as it Were, transported to it of a sudden : But whether the one or the other, the Way is prepar'd, and they are disposed to it, by, *first*, Pride, *Secondly*, an Immoderate Love of the World.

World. *Thirdly*, Fretfulness and Impatience with Difficulties and Troubles, *4thly*, Fear of Shame. *Fifthly*, Despair and Distrust of Divine Providence. For these cause a Disturbance in the Soul, by raising tumultuous Commotions, between Duty and Sense, Reason and seeming Interest; and during this Confusion they cannot defend themselves but *fall into the Snare of the Devil*: For he watcheth, lays hold on the Opportunity, and enters the Distracted and Divided Soul, and hurrieth it to that which is both its Shame and Ruin. As he first put it into *Judas* his Heart to betray his Master, and afterwards, by Shame and Dispair moved him to Hang himself.

XXI. Wherefore, as it concerns every one to preserve himself from this Heinous Offence, so for this End these Things are necessary and requisite. *First*, Prayer to G O D, that we be not left to our selves, nor given up to the Devil's Temptations, but have Grace to resist them. *Secondly*, Humility, which may be learned by serious and frequent Reflections on our selves, our Sins, and Distance from G O D; for this will convince us, that we are less than the



least of GOD's Mercies, and that there is so little Reason to complain for what is wanting, that there is always Matter of Praise for some Things not deserved. *Why should a living Man complain? a Man for the Punishment of his Sins!* Thirdly, A Christian Contempt of the World, by the Consideration, that *Man's Life doth not consist in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth.* Fourthly, An entire Resignation to GOD, whose infinite Wisdom knows what is best for us, whose almighty Power can do above what we can either ask or think, and whose Goodness has passed large Promises to all who trust in him. *I laid me down and Slept, and Awaked, for the Lord sustained me.* Fifthly, The serious Remembrance, that both Man's Life upon Earth, and the Christian Profession is a continual Warfare; and consequently, Combats, Wrestlings and Strugglings, should neither surprize nor fright. He is a Poltroon, and not fit to be a Soldier, who Ducks at Dangers, or Runs away or hides himself when the Drum beats, or the Trumpet sounds to Battle. JESUS CHRIST, our Captain and Leader, was perfected by Sufferings, and it is our Duty to follow him. It is only thro' Tribulations and Afflictions



Afflictions that we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. *Sixthly*, Christian Fortitude or Patience, by considering the Author of Afflictions, the Usefulness and Reward of bearing them cheerfully. This is the Crown of all Virtues, most acceptable to GOD, and the Glory of a Man; for it is a Sign of Knowledge, Wisdom and Strength of Mind. *If I* <sup>1 Cor. 11;</sup> *must needs Glory, I will Glory of the Things* <sup>30.</sup> *which concern mine Infirmities*, saith St. Paul, meaning his Sufferings. *My Brethren, count it all Joy when ye fall into diverse Temptations. Blessed is the Man that endureth Temptation, for when he is tryed, he shall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* Jam. 1. 2, 12. *Seventhly*, Faith and Hope by the Meditation of GOD's Word, for these represent Things both more truly and more pleasantly than natural Sight or Sense; these give Light in Darkness, and shew that the most ugly Appearance, and the most desperate Junctures may have a joyful Issue. *Ye have heard of the Patience of Job, and have seen the End of the LORD, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender Mercy.* Jam. 5. 2. *It is good that a Man should both hope and quietly wait for the Salvation of the*

*the LORD*, for it often cometh when it is not looked for, and when, in Humane Probability, it seems impossible. By these Things the Spirit may be kept up in all outward Circumstances. Who is thus fortified, has inward Peace and Tranquillity, and is able to hold out against all the Chances and Changes of this World: nor can the Devil approach to hurt him. Melancholy Impatience and Discontent open the Door to him, but such Serenity of Mind barrs him out. Nor can he prevail, while these fore-mentioned Divine Virtues are maintained; for he can only Tempt, he can have no Power over us, unless we yield and give way to him. *Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.* I will conclude with what *St. Augustine* saith on this Head.

“ This we positively say, this we confidently assert, this, by all means, we recommend and approve, that it is not lawful for any to kill Himself; not for shunning temporal Evils, because avoiding them this Way, we fall into Eternal; not for the Sins of others, because then we contract a heavy and greivous Sin of our own, which defiles; whereas the Sin of another does not; not for our own past Sins, because

“ because then there is greater Need of  
“ Life, for Healing and Cleansing these  
“ Sins by Repentance; not for the Desire  
“ of that better Life after this, because  
“ that Better Life, will admitt of none  
“ who are guilty of their own Death.”  
*Aug. de Civ. Dei L. 1. C. 26.*

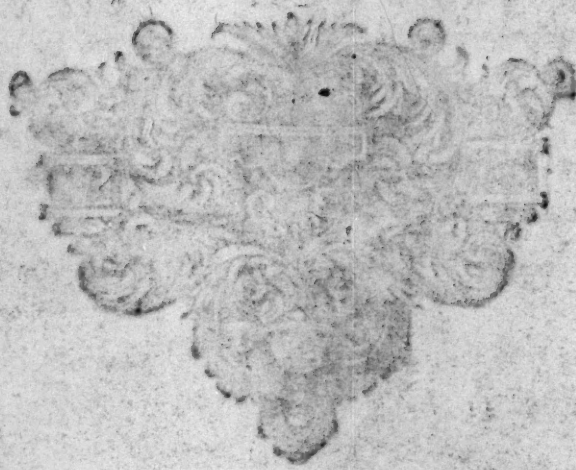


**F I N I S.**



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May 11. 1699. 20 JY 69



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